The USFWS ADS Update!

By Janice Whitney, R3 CTO (right photo) &
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Why implement Active Directory Services (ADS)?

In September of 2002 DOI announced two decisions: 1) To standardize Microsoft computer and network operating systems (OS) and office automation software and 2) To develop Microsoft (MS) ADS throughout all Bureaus. These decisions were based on the need to: 1) Improve the information technology (IT) management infrastructure and 2) Tighten IT security and information protection as a result of the Cobell litigation and IT audits. These two decisions are part of DOI's directive response to the Executive Branch's focus to reduce IT budgets. To reduce IT budgets and to tighten security ADS implementation meets the Service's three goals to: 1) Lower the total cost of ownership, 2) Ensure a greater return on investment and 3) Realize economies of scale. In many region and Washington Office (WO) program offices Windows NT and Novell networks need to be retired.

How did FWS plan the ADS Project?

A FWS cross-disciplinary team representing all region and program offices was assembled in early FY03 to design an ADS configuration consistent with the mission, structure and culture of the Service. Several members of this team also worked closely with other DOI bureaus to ensure that the FWS ADS could accommodate future inclusion into the DOI ADS. The FWS ADS project team completed the following five products as part of the planning process: 1) Requirements document, 2) Detailed design document, 3) Implementation strategy, 4) Regional site questionnaire and 5) Governance Council Charter. Phase I of the ADS project targets ADS implementation at all regional offices, the California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO), MBMO-Patuxent, and NCTC. Region 3 is the pilot region for Phase I. Phase II includes ADS deployment at all SWAN connected field offices.

What is the current status of the FWS ADS Project?

FWS has completed the ADS implementation for approximately 35% of the Phase I locations.   Most regions have completed the discovery process required to analyze the environment. Then regions customize migration strategies to target specific needs. Some regions migrate all of the workstations, user accounts and data at once. Other regions migrate office-by-office. A third strategy is to migrate workstations and user accounts first and then gradually migrate the data. Several field offices have completed pilot ADS deployments. Others are in the queue.

Research and planning will result in the development of an automatic network rollover to an alternate SWAN connection (e.g. modem) in case of a WAN network connection outage.

What are the future plans to implement the ADS Project?

Mike Howell, our new AD/CIO, has expressed interest in seeing ADS move forward. The first firm milestone is the implementation of ADS to meet the Financial Business Management System requirement.

Meet LE Chief Technology Officer George Volentir

George enjoys working with the people in the USFWS Law Enforcement (LE) division and feels fortunate to be able to make a difference in the world and to give back to the environment. A former contractor for IRTM, George enjoys traveling to R9 once or twice a month from Denver.

LE is co-located with BCT and relies on IRTM for its infrastructure and connectivity across the SWAN. LE's partnership with IRTM is strong and works well. LE's biggest challenge is security: To keep information accessible yet secure.

LE investigates wildlife crimes, regulates wildlife trade (in the U.S. alone, the annual wildlife trade exceeds $1.3 billion), helps Americans understand and obey wildlife protection laws, and works in partnership with international, state, and tribal counterparts to conserve wildlife resources. LE focuses on potentially devastating threats to wildlife resources – illegal trade, unlawful commercial exploitation, habitat destruction, and environmental contaminants. Some results of LE (reported in the 2002 annual report) are: 1) 8500 cases opened, 2) Over $2 million assessed in penalties, 3) $2.7 million collected in and 4) 8700 violations documented.

LE uses the LEMIS (LE Management Information System) to track investigations and to build a knowledge base. LEMIS allows investigators to gather and to document evidence and to research laws that are violated. Eventually the LEMIS documents are presented to the U.S. Attorney's office.

U.S. imports and exports are also tracked through the LEMIS declarations model. LEMIS provides great customer service through electronic declaration (eDec) applications to customers to import or to export fish, plants, or wildlife. There are about 120,000 annual shipments and many applications es also require the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) permits (issued by FWS Management Authority Division). The declarations are sent electronically to the port of entry where wildlife inspectors review the eDecs to determine which shipments to clear, to inspect, or to refuse.

LE is one of the first FWS divisions to provide electronic fee payment by credit card through Pay.gov. Pay.gov empowers administrative officers to track the entire payment process from when the customer pays to when the FWS Finance Center in Denver disperses the fees to the Regions who collect them. Pay.gov is available through a collaboration with the Department of Treasury, tracks collections and provides robust reporting, and will be the exclusive collection method used by the Treasury department in the next few years.

Look for Sonexis Conferencing-Part 2 in the 12/1/04 edition!